

How to enhance democracy?

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Definitions

Democracy is a political regime such that :

- the necessary conditions for well-being are insured for all
- each person has the same power of decision on issues that matter for them,

where the **necessary conditions for well-being** are the ability to have access to:

- drinkable water, food, health-care
- a healthy environment, security, housing
- attention, an education, information

Definition

Subsidiarity is the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.

Subsidiarity principle reveals us that some stakes must be decided at the international scale, notably:

- fight and adaptation to the climate change
- regulation of financial markets and the monetary system
- allocation of non renewable resources
- fight of poverty

A global governance

- should be inclusive, *i.e.* gather all the willing countries
- should be able to issue money or to levy taxes
- should rely on a justice and an *ex post* inspection
- could adopt important measures by global referenda
- could have a parliament whose members would be elected proportionally on worldwide lists
- could consult the population reunited in commissions made out of citizens randomly drawn

A global governance could:

- forbid or tax certain practices emitting greenhouse gas
- issue the equivalent of 1% of the gross world product to finance infrastructures, public services or direct cash transfers
- tax capital gains or inheritance, forbid certain damaging speculative contracts
- fix rules for the allocation of scarce resources such as water or copper

Money commands goods and services, hence possessing money (or having the responsibility to choose how to spend resources) **gives a power of decision.**

In order to enhance democracy, **capital should be more equally distributed, and everyone should have their say on the spendings of the public sectors and on the allocation of credit** by banks.

Definition

Participatory Budgeting is a form of direct democracy at the local level, where all citizens allocate annually investment resources in sectors and/or projects of their choice.

Sintomer has retained five criteria required to qualify a PB :

- 1 all citizens can participate to the choice of the allocation of resources
- 2 this occurs at an administrative level of power (for example a town, but not a quarter)
- 3 this process has to be repeated over years
- 4 a deliberation must take place in a specific institution
- 5 citizens should be informed *ex post* of the status of the budget and the projects.

History

- 80's (the origins): a strong civil society in South America in the 80's
- 90's: the Brazilian rise
- 00's: the global spread[7]

Effects

In Porto Alegre (the most studied case), the main effects are [3]:

- a better allocation of resources (more equitably and appropriately distributed among sectors and communities)
- an increase in the financing of basic needs
- a more inclusive, less corrupted democracy
- an increase in tax receipts

Table : Impacts using only municipalities that implemented Participatory Budgeting in Brazil before 1996 (World Bank [8])

	Matching with votes for Workers' Party		
	Poverty rates	Access to piped water	Sewerage
Participatory Budgeting	-11,06***	0,11***	0,34***
GDP per capita	-2,93***	0,02***	0,00
R ²	0,52	0,39	0,41

Note: * $p < 0,1$; ** $p < 0,05$; *** $p < 0,01$

The magnitudes of the coefficients are not meaningful here.

Conditions of success

- a strong mayoral support
- an active civil society

- self-ruling given to citizens for the mechanisms of the PB
- consequent financial resources to fund the projects selected by citizens

- Social credit is a theory developed by C. H. Douglas in the 20's that criticizes our current system Money as Debt and proposes a new system where money creation would be insured solely by the State and new credit would be given (and not loaned) equally to anyone.
- This view that the creation of money shouldn't be attributed to private companies seeking profit is backed by numerous persons, including the 1988 economics "Nobel prize" Maurice Allais.
- uCoin is a project of crypto-currency aiming to concretize the idea of Universal Dividend (aka basic income).[1]

Sortition have been used to appoint policymakers and magistrates in different times and places : antic Athens and Roma, Florence and Venice during Renaissance, today's citizens' juries in UK, US and France, constituent assembly of Iceland, consensus conferences in Denmark...

Although generally sortition does not withdraw the issue of representativeness, it is certainly the best way to take into account the opinion of the crowd.

Both evaluative and storable voting share the advantage of allowing the voters to express the intensity of their preferences, which is predicted to increase the overall satisfaction.

While evaluative voting concerns one vote with several options, storable voting is designed for a sequence of choices.

MMP is a voting system used to elect a chamber of representatives that reconcile the link of members to a geographical constituency with the overall political representativeness.

Germany, New Zealand, Lesotho and Romania use different variants of this system.

MMP insures that a given proportion of seats are given to constituencies' winners, while the remaining seats are attributed so as to insure proportionality of the chamber.

Definition

Delegative democracy (also known as “liquid democracy”) is a form of **direct democracy** that could be implemented on a large scale, thanks to the ability given to any **voter** to **delegate its vote** upon one proposition, one domain (set of propositions), or every propositions. **The delegation process is permanent, reviewable and transitive.**

Major (free) softwares of delegative democracy:

- **Get Opinionated** (Belgium pirate party)
- **DemocracyOS** (Partido de la Red is their “trojan legislator”)

There exist many other different e-democracy platforms[5]:
e.g. Podemos uses reddit, Movimiento 5 Stello uses Airesis...

Pros:

- Better inclusion of lambda citizen's concerns and opinions
- Transparency: ease to get informed and to communicate
- Improvement and spread of the political debate and understanding

Con:

- Exclusion of the *digital illiterates*

Because the digital literacy is still not complete, a decision-making e-democracy is out of place for the moment, but there is no reason for a consultative e-democracy not to be implemented.

Debian is an Operating System, one of the most popular linux distribution. It is developed according to the *Debian Constitution*, an e-democracy system sometimes called a *do-ocracy*, which is the largest and longest-lived online deliberative body.

The thousand of developers are selected through a bureaucratic application process.

Developers can propose, sponsor, and vote on general resolutions. They may overrule or even remove the project leader, amend the constitution, and rule on any technical or non-technical issue. The project leader, elected yearly, must make urgent decisions and is the public and internal figurehead of the organization.

The Standard Resolution Procedure uses an adapted version of Schulze method (a Condorcet method).[6][2]

Many different tools exist, but they face several issues, the two mains being reaching the critical size for their community, and finding a business model.

It is sad to see hundreds of persons working of dozens of similar projects, thus duplicating the development process. Even when they know that they should collaborate and agree on the spirit of free software, it is hard for them to merge the projects that have already begun and undertaken technological choices.[4]

I believe that our society needs e-democracy to foster the political debates and improve its quality ; but developing good e-democracy platforms requires the backing of a large community. This is precisely I am promoting e-democracy.

- [1] cgeek. <http://ucoin.io/>.
- [2] Debian. <http://www.debian.org/devel/constitution>.
- [3] Adrien Fabre. An overview of participatory budgeting. <http://wegivethe99percents.org/Documents/PB.pdf>.
- [4] Adrien Fabre. *Eloge de la naivete*. 2013.
- [5] <https://framacalc.org/veilleE-democratie>. e-democracy curation.
- [6] Gunnar Ristroph. Debian's democracy. 2009.
- [7] Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, and Giovanni Allegretti. Les budgets participatifs dans le monde. *Dialog Global*, 2014.
- [8] WorldBank. Brazil toward a more inclusive and effective participatory budget in porto alegre (volume i: main report). Technical report, World Bank, 2008.